

DIOCESE OF WEST MALAYSIA

SYNOD 2015

18 AUGUST 2015

St Paul's Church Petaling Jaya

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Rt Rev Datuk Ng Moon Hing

KEEP MY LAMP BURNING

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Psalm 18:28-29 (NIV)

²⁸You, LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.

²⁹With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.

1.0 MALAYSIA – A FAILED STATE??¹

Recently we watched Greece, once a developed state, on the verge of becoming a failed state. It has sought loans extension and a new loan of 50 billion Euros for the third time from the European Union (EU) to prop up its treasury. There are so many hanky-panky things going on for the past few decades.² Even Greece, once a Christian nation, could not correct or shape the mindset of the Greeks of corruption. It seems like there is no one in Greece who fear God. Is it due to faith or theology or interpretation or pure rejection of truth or absence of truth???

Similarly, we saw in the United States of America the coming of moral disaster by calling evil good and good evil³ in the approval and changing of two Canon laws of The Episcopal Church (TEC) from traditional marriage to marriage of same sex after the Federal Court upheld the marriage of same-sex.⁴ Of course, there are still those who called themselves the Communion Partners who do not agree with the rest of the Episcopal Bishops of TEC on this issue of same sex marriage.⁵ What has USA become? We in the Diocese of West Malaysia stand with the Province of South East Asia and together with the Global South Anglicans in rejecting the teaching of human sexuality as upheld by TEC.⁶ In fact our Province has already severed ties with TEC some years ago when they went ahead in the consecration of a gay bishop in 2003.⁷

There seems to be no difference in Malaysia in terms of the fear of God – the financial scandal is alleged linked to nation's top leadership; those who speak out for justice, equality, transparency and integrity have either been transferred or sacked or arrested; the education level of the nation has gone to the drain; racial polarisation is at its peak awaiting eruption anytime, the ringgit has dropped to its 20 years low so much so that the foreign reserve has gone below USD100 billion, democracy has almost be superseded by a state with authoritarian rule, the so called Westminster model of government has almost become non-existent in practice with all its three branches i.e. executive,

¹ "Malaysia is on its way to becoming a failed state, with institutions failing to function and lawmakers ignoring the very laws they created, says Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan" –

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/malaysia-on-slippery-slope-to-becoming-failed-state-says-ambiga>

² "Why can't Greece shake its corruption problem?" By The Boston Globe at

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2014/08/22/why-can-greece-shake-its-corruption-problem/6nwZglU9cmn70xq2x4sobM/story.html> and

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tax_evasion_and_corruption_in_Greece and

<http://www.care2.com/causes/greek-taxi-drivers-fake-blindness-to-get-disability-payments.html>

³ Isaiah 5:20 "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

⁴ <http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2015/07/usa-episcopal-general-convention-approves-marriage-equality.aspx>

⁵ <http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2015/07/18-tec-bishops-sign-minority-report-on-marriage-equality.aspx>

⁶ http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/comments/statement_in_response_to_the_house_of_bishops_of_the_episcopal_church_resol

⁷ http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/comments/statement_by_province_of_southeast_asia_standing_committee

judiciary and legislature not functioning independently.⁸ What can the Church do? How are we supposed to pray?

2.0 THE PAST AND PRESENT

Many have asked the question why is the Anglican Church in West Malaysia so old and yet so small. After the British first landed in Penang in 1786, they took them a long time to establish themselves and finally in 1805, the first church was built. It was the chapel in Fort Cornwallis which we can still visit today only as a tourist site. The British who first came was purely for business purposes. They are from the East India Company. They brought along chaplains to help them to manage the 'hatched, matched and despatched'. Soon in 1817, St George's Church in Penang was planned and built. When it was completed and the consecration was carried out in 1819, at the same year Stamford Raffles has discovered Singapore. The focus of attention was quickly diverted to Singapore from Penang. Within a short period, the St Andrew's Church (prepared for a Cathedral) was built and completed in 1824. By the same year, Captain James Brooke has founded Sarawak. Again history repeated itself, the focus of attention in Singapore was slowly taken over by the happenings in Sarawak, especially Labuan and Kuching. Within a short 30 years, in 1855, the Rev. F.T. McDougall was made an Area Bishop of Labuan and Sarawak by the Bishop of Calcutta. Penang and Singapore then have not even expanded beyond their shores, let alone forming a diocese. In 1869, the Diocese of Labuan and Sarawak (the name Singapore was added in 1881) was formed.⁹

The first hundred years of Anglicanism in this part of the world was concentrated in Borneo, and certainly not in Malaya or the Straits Settlement. In 1909, decisions were made in England to divide the diocese of Labuan, Sarawak and Singapore into two, namely the Diocese of Borneo and the Diocese of Singapore. Bishop Ferguson-Davie was the first Bishop of Singapore. During his and his successors' tenure, they tried to develop ministries and plant churches in Malaya but it was heavily hampered by the two World Wars and the Economic Depression in the 1930s. Another fifty years has past and Malaya has not been given much attention. It was always treated as the backyard of the diocese. Until the Merdeka in 1957, suggestions and talks about a new nation and new interests were created with the coming of many missionaries from China. They were mostly British missionaries who were kicked out of the newly formed Communist China in the early 1950s. In 1959, the first Asian bishop who was also the youngest bishop in the Anglican Communion then, in the

⁸ http://www.malaysia-chronicle.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=569771:mujahid-predicts-chaos-what-failed-state?-msia-becoming-dictatorship-says-pas-leader&Itemid=2#axzz3iNvYNpqq and <http://mediarakyat.net/2015/08/09/14523/> (The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Calls on the Authorities to Uphold the Aspirations of All Malaysians) and <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/rinqait-near-17-year-low-as-fx-reserves-fall-below-us100-billion> and Tun Mahathir laments about the scandals of the present PM and said, "Democracy is dead. It is dead because an elected leader chooses to subvert the institutions of government and make them his instruments for sustaining himself." - See more at: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/najib-has-undermined-democracy-and-institutions-says-dr-mahathir>

⁹ S. Batumalai, *A Bicentenary History of the Anglican Church of the Diocese of West Malaysia (1805 – 2005)*, Malaysia, 2007.

person of Bishop Roland Koh, was consecrated and made the Assistant Bishop of Malaya.¹⁰ It was later the name Malaya was added to the Diocese which became the Diocese of Singapore and Malaya.

Literally, for the first 150 years of Anglicanism, Malaya (now West Malaysia) was always been treated as the backyard of the Anglican Church in South East Asia. Bishop Roland Koh gave his best 11 years (3 years as Vicar of Selangor, 6 years as Assistant Bishop of Malaya and 2 years as Diocesan Bishop of West Malaysia) to serve in Malaya. In 1965, he was made the first Asian Bishop of the Diocese of Sabah. He was later asked to come back and became the first Diocesan Bishop of West Malaysia in 1970. For these last 50 years, the Anglican Church in West Malaysia was given full attention to ministry for the first time. It was not easy at all. There were three major exoduses of Christians from this land during the past 60 years. First, the British people, including the soldiers, merchants, civil servants and ordinary citizens left this land when Malaya attained independence in 1957. The second batch left for good after the 1963 formation of Malaysia. The third batch was the locals who left after the 1969 May 13 riot. Majority of the British who left were church goers and their exodus meant huge vacuum in the church leadership as well as membership. This has actually affected the church finance and man power. When the Diocese of West Malaysia was created in 1970, there were 36 church buildings with about one third of them were without any congregation or worshipping community. This was mainly due to the fact that these churches were formerly largely congregated by the British planters or soldiers or civilians.

We thank God for the past 45 years, with much toil and hard work under the leadership of the late Bishop Roland Koh, the late Bishop John Savarimuthu, Bishop Lim Cheng Ean and all the bishops, clergy and lay leadership of the past and present, we are able to come to this stage today and we can proudly claim to have 143 churches and worship centres, in which altogether we have 245 congregations worshipping every Sunday.

3.0 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF OUR DIOCESE

In anticipation of challenges and extremism, we as a Church must be prepared to face all eventualities. So far we have been doing fire-fighting most of the times instead of pro-active measures. What can these measures be?

This is my 9th Synod as the Bishop of the Diocese. In my first Synod in 2007, there were 70 priests, 7 deaconesses and 106 lay members in the Synod. The total Sunday attendance then was 7,984. Today we can see some changes in the number of priests and lay members in the 2015 Synod though not significant.¹¹ Statistics should not be the only indicator of growth or level of preparation. We have to

¹⁰ I have the privilege of meeting with Puan Sri Koh – Hoh Wai Ying, the wife of the late Bishop Roland Koh, in Toronto together with her son, John Koh, in June 2015. She is 97 years old and still very alert and active. Her memory is sharp and clear with the remembrance of many names and places in Malaysia. She sends her regards to all she knew back then.

¹¹ According to the Synod reports of 2007 and 2015, the following statistics shown is for comparison:

2007: Priests – 70; Deaconesses – 7; Laity – 106; Sunday – 7,984; Easter – 10,799; Christmas – 12,292.

2015: Priests – 83; Deaconesses – 22; Laity – 139; Sunday – 9,587; Easter – 12,509; Christmas – 15,580.

(The 2007 statistics for Sunday, Easter and Christmas attendances do not include a few churches due to late submission of reports. So another 200 is added to make it a more realistic figure. The percentage increases for the period of 2015 over 2007 are Sunday – 20.08%, Easter – 16.27%, and Christmas – 26.75%.) Please note that the Synod report does not include

look at other parameters too. I have charged a 30 year vision for our Diocese in 2007. We have been working hard though sometimes I wish that we can be more focus. However, my engineering experience has told me that in all building materials and projects, there must be an allowance of a minimum factor of 2 or sometimes 3 to be included.¹² Similarly, I am not expecting a fast growth rather a normal growth with a factor of 2 or 3 times slower but working doubly harder.¹³ Dealing with human beings is unpredictable always. With the rate of our present growth, I am quite pleased though there is much room for improvement. I have also learnt this from my ministry to the Orang Asli. I began with a 30 year vision to groom a whole new generation of Orang Asli. Today we are seeing encouraging signs. I have always considered the ministry and training of the adults as bonus. Since 1995, the ministry to the Orang Asli has begun, we are proud to recognise the vast numbers of kampongs (more than 50) we have reached.¹⁴ We have 2 ordained OA priests, 2 deaconesses, many lay pastors and evangelists, more than 10 TEE students. A few are pursuing their Masters. They have just started and hope that one day some of them will contribute to the teaching force of STM. The level of biblical knowledge, commitment to prayers and worship has risen tremendously. The youth, children, women and adults are growing in numbers as well as maturing in Christ. They are now doing their own mission and evangelism works in bringing the gospel to new OA kampongs. At this stage, there are still 4 new OA chapels completed and awaiting dedication. It will be done soonest possible time available.

3.1 Spirituality Deficit

We, Anglicans, are good in liturgy but in most cases, unfortunately, we have the form and not so much the life of liturgy. However, this does lead to the type of lifestyle we live. Liturgy is, in fact, very much linked to theology. A half-baked theology will eventually produce a half-baked Christian – one who seems to have the form of belief but lack the real substance to be a wholesome living Christian. Who are we to blame? God? Bishops? Archdeacons? Canons? Priests? Deaconesses? Evangelists? Lay Readers? Lay Pastors? PCC members? Christians? Ourselves? No one indeed! This is a process of learning and growing. In other words, it is known as ‘sanctification’ – a process of maturity.

Having a continuous learning attitude is very crucial, and it is also an essential virtue to be a disciple of Christ. A closer examination does reveal a serious deficit in the basic belief of many Christian brethren. The famous German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, referred to it as ‘cheap grace’ and ‘costly grace’. Many Christians knew shallowly or have ignorantly embraced ‘cheap grace’ as their belief and way of life. It looks attractive and is easy to attain. We can almost see such expression daily among our congregation members, and it is also reflected in their so-called Christian walks and

the attendance of the outreaches, including the Orang Asli chapels and the village churches, and children in Sunday Schools and youth in Youth Fellowships. The Synod reports are only representation of the Parishes and Missionary Districts.

¹² We learnt that it is crucial to make these allowances in all projects – for example, 15% allowance for material defects; 15% allowance of human handling errors; 15% of eventualities such as weather (rain, storm, drought, flood); 15% for accidents, traffic delays, strikes, minor riots, workers’ moods, etc.

¹³ I have been working all these 30 years in the church with a formula which I have developed and is known as 100 – 50 – 200 which is target 100%, expect 50% but work 200%. In this manner, though my expectation is low, the double amount of efforts put in will possibly bring in a high yield. In this way, I will not be too disappointed when the results come in. High expectation leads to high disappointment. I always work prefer to work with joy and expect bonus than disappointment.

¹⁴ Ng Moon Hing, *From Village To Village*, Diocese of West Malaysia, KL, 2009.

actions, e.g. lives with no fear in God. Such phenomenon often begins with a weak and shallow understanding of the meaning of salvation. Generally understood, the work of salvation is completely Christ's job or the finished work of Christ. This is correct. However, the impression many Christians seem to have received is that Christ did all the works thus, we, human, are only passive recipients of the salvation work, especially when there is little teaching of this subject these days. Hence, this has, to a large extent, contributed to a superficial laid-back lifestyle with attending Sunday church as compulsory Christian duty rather worship; praying to God only for blessings, healings and success rather listening to God; making some donations and offerings as a peace-offering rather thanksgiving; making confession as one paying fine to settle a traffic offence rather true repentance; receiving Holy Communion as a protection from Christ rather truly identifying with Christ in suffering, obedience and sacrifice. A careful study of the different models of atonement which we have received from the early church fathers will help us to identify where the alleged weakness or deficit Christians have mistakenly assumed.

The Penal Substitution model of atonement is the sinless Christ became the sacrificial lamb punished in the place of humanity. In other words, we, sinful human beings, are supposed to die but He took our place and died on our behalf. He paid the penalty for us so that the demand of God's justice is fulfilled and He can pronounce forgiveness. The result is that our sins are erased and we are cleansed and set free to receive and enjoy the blessings of salvation through faith. The Satisfaction model of atonement is the sinless Christ willingly took the form of man (incarnation), in order to pacify and satisfy God's wrath, being obedient, laid down and offer His life even to die on the cross so that God and human have fellowship and peace again. The result is that we reap and share the peace of God and never again subjected to God's wrath. The Christus Victor model of atonement depicts Christ in His death and resurrection has overcome and defeated sin, death and the devil. This speaks of Christ's triumph 'over the evil powers of the world, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself.'¹⁵ The result is that God has done everything for us, and everything is alright and victorious for those who believe in Christ. While adhering to such great belief which is true and correct, any shallow or simplified form of such belief will inevitable to lead a life in cheap grace. The obvious omission in this sort of superficial belief is the absence in the realms of repentance and forgiveness, renunciation and discipline, reconciliation and restoration, community living and fellowship, commitment and sacrifice. Without these, we will make the Incarnation and the Sacrifice of Christ useless and meaningless.¹⁶ The famous Bonhoeffer's quote can be reiterated and paraphrased here as: The Salvation of Christ is free for all but it is definitely not cheap; it is costly and costs Jesus' life.¹⁷ A proper understanding of the Word of God and the Salvation Work of Christ is utmost important to all new and old Christians. A serious call to Intentional Discipleship is inevitable, more so, if we are to face and withstand the increasing onslaught of extremism and intense persecution in the days to come. We have many Christians but part-time disciples, many pastors but part-time disciples.

¹⁵ Veli-Matti Karkkaian, *A Constructive Christian Theology For the Futuristic World, Volume 1: Christ and Reconciliation*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, chapter 11 – *Atonement Traditions*, p. 299f. Of course, there are other less popular models such as: 1) The Moral Model which speaks of the sinless Christ as a good man chose to lay down His life for the sinners. 2) The Recapitulation Model which speaks of the sinless Christ recapitulated all the stages of life in Himself in order to reverse the course of Adam's sin, fall from grace, to lead humanity back to God where Christ can communicate immortality with those who believe and are united with Him thus effecting a transformation in their lives – a renewed humanity.

¹⁶ Veli-Matti Karkkaian, chapter 13 – *Toward a Contemporary Trinitarian Theology of Reconciliation*, p324f.

¹⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship, Section 1 – Grace and Discipleship*, Touchstone, USA, 1995.

Everyone, both pastors and lay members, must be engaged in a life of discipleship.¹⁸ Our churches must rise up and take bolder and urgent steps to self-equip and self-prepare as Disciples of Christ.

I was glancing over the stories and biographies of some spiritual giants of faith and found a common trait that all of them possessed i.e. a close walk with Jesus daily or a life of complete faith and trust in Jesus or a life of devotion and prayer with Jesus or a family altar. In order to appreciate and acknowledge the importance and power in this holy trait, I will highlight a few of them. It was recorded that Martin Luther and his wife Katherine had six children, and he 'would arise at six each morning and pray with his children, they would recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, and then sing a psalm. He would then hurry off to preach or to lecture and would be busy the entire day.'¹⁹ Samuel Rutherford was remembered 'not as the courageous apologist or the dogmatic theologian but as a man who lived so close to the Saviour's heart.'²⁰ 'Matthew [Henry] was usually in his study before five o'clock each morning, devoting himself to the preparation of his exposition of the Word. He had breakfast with his family and always led them in worship.'²¹ In her own journal, Mother Teresa wrote a letter to Jesus, in it she committed herself fully to God, saying, 'If my separation from You – brings others to You and in their love and company You find joy and pleasure – why Jesus, I am willing with all my heart to suffer all that I suffer – not only now – but for all eternity.'²²

These examples remind us that these spiritual giants were once weak and ordinary people like us until they had a close walk with Jesus daily. This is an urgent call to all to return to a life worthy of the Lord. A life with Christ is more of a life of being than of doing.

3.2 The Anglican Communion Five Marks of Mission²³

In 1984, at the 6th Anglican Consultative Council, the concept of evangelism was expanded into five distinct activities based on Jesus' own summary of mission. It was adopted as the Anglican Communion Five Marks of Mission.

"The Five Marks of Mission are an important statement on mission which expresses the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic/integral mission.

The Five Marks of Mission are:

- *To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom*

¹⁸ I am presently the Convenor of the Anglican Witness – the Mission & Evangelism Department of the Anglican Communion. We are advocating and proposing to the ACC-16 in Lusaka, Zambia next April to adopt a 10 year Intentional Discipleship for the whole Anglican Communion. There are many Christians but very few Disciples of Christ. Our call is to be Disciples of Christ of all nations.

¹⁹ Warren Wiersbe, *50 People Every Christian Should Know – Learning from Spiritual Giants of the Faith*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2009, chapter 1 on Katherine von Bora, p.13

²⁰ Warren Wiersbe, op. cit., chapter 2 on Samuel Rutherford, p.23

²¹ Ibid., chapter 3 on Matthew Henry, p.26

²² Michelle Derusha, *50 Women Every Christian Should Know – Learning from Heroines of the Faith*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2014, chapter 44 on Mother Teresa, p.311f

²³ <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/identity/marks-of-mission.aspx>

- *To teach, baptise and nurture new believers*
- *To respond to human need by loving service*
- *To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation*
- *To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth*

This is a very comprehensive and sufficient scope of mission. All our churches should use this as our markers. We can comfortably argue that the first three marks are within our scope and we can vouch their existence. We do encourage all our churches to give a sincere focus and more emphasis to these first two marks, this is the life of the church and we are in the business of enlarging the Kingdom of God on earth. Discipleship is the key to strengthening the churches. Enough talks on discipleship training and disciple-making have been said and heard, now is the time to act and get into the real business of making disciples. For the last couple of years, our diocese has embarked in the Training for Disciple Makers. A number of our churches have already started the One year Discipleship Training for members. Our Saviour's Church, Salak South has become a model church in this respect. They have done it for 5 years and more than half the church members have been trained. They have raised up, in recent years, more workers for the harvest field than any church in our diocese. Our Diocesan Missioner, Canon John Ganapathy, has also initiated and planted many churches throughout the diocese.

Perhaps, the third mark may not be up to the expectant passing mark yet. The Anglican Care of our diocese, since its inception in 2006, has only 18 registered church social care centres/ministries.²⁴ We praise God for these 18 social centres/ministries. I am sure there are still others in our churches which have not registered themselves under the Anglican Care. We, the diocese, still have a long way to go in the caring service. I was asked a couple of times about the purpose and role of the Anglican Care. It was set up to facilitate the sharing of a common vision for caring, training for care-givers, fostering of fellowship and connection among care-givers. Annually the care-givers in Anglican Care gather at a retreat to learn, encourage and build up each other and to share their journey and stories together. It is upon us, as children of God, to extend our help and care to each other, especially those who are less fortunate and unable to help themselves. Each one of us may not be in the position to give relevant caring help but a collective group, such as the local church, certainly can do a lot more. Veli-Matti Karkkainen, an evangelical theologian, in his book, *Trinity and Revelation*, argued that our God is a hospitable God (*please note that he used the words 'hospitable' and 'hospitality' instead of the words 'care' and 'welfare'*). His treaties together with the words from Pohl's book 'Making Room', he also reiterated and quoted,²⁵

²⁴ The Anglican Care is the umbrella body of the social arm of the diocese. Its aims are: 1) To provide a diocesan umbrella coverage to the local church caring ministries, 2) To share resources and training facilities for care-givers, 3) To enhance identity and recognition for the ministries of the local church social concern as the extension of God's Love & Care, 4) To appraise and recognize the plight of care-givers and their ministries as God's servants, 5) To search and encourage more local churches to participate in social care ministry, 6) To fulfill the Great Commandment of Jesus to love God and love man. Presently, the Anglican Care embodies ministries to the blind, children with learning difficulties, youth with learning difficulties, senior citizen homes, orphanage and children homes, feeding the poor, soup kitchen, single mothers, hostel for Orang Asli children, children with multiple handicaps, etc.

²⁵ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, op. cit., Vol. 2, *Trinity and Revelation*, chapter 13 Divine Hospitality, p. 310f

“At the cross, God’s self-giving [is] the most profound act of hospitality The divinity of the triune God consists in that “God gives” himself..... [H]ospitality is a Christian virtue, derived from God, who is the giver and gift..... [H]ospitality can be easily abused – as love and mercy can be – yet in light of biblical revelation, the opposite is the case: ‘hospitality carries risks’, it includes sacrifice, self-giving, discipleship, turning to others.... The hospitality of God is dynamic. It invites active human commitment in reciprocal, specific, sensibly executed hospitable action..... Hospitality is not optional for Christians, nor is it limited to those who are specially gifted for it. It is, instead, a necessary practice in the community of faith.”

One of the other caring ministerial skills is the Malaysian Indigenous Clinical Pastoral Education (MICPE). It attempts to first train and develop self-care and self awareness before becoming a care-giver. All the Bible Schools, Theological Colleges and Seminaries equip potential church workers with lots of biblical knowledge and theology; however, they all need the church to complement in the realm of providing training skill for self-care and emotional support as a care-giver as well as a pastor whose role is also pastoral care giving. Over the last eight years since its inception, MICPE has seen eight batches of students graduating. This is only the first stage of self-care and self awareness. Since 2007, all ordinands are required to and have gone through the MICPE. The MICPE, in fact, complement the Anglican Care greatly. It is our hope that the standard of pastoral care will improve as we see more people, both clergy and laity, are trained to self-care before pastoral care. Dr. Edmund Ng, a Malaysian and a Qualified Counsellor and Grief Therapist, stressed that many Christians, including pastors, are not reaching out and care for the grieving, hurting and needy people, ‘not because they lack the compassion or concern for them, but because they lack the understanding, knowledge, and skill as to what to say and do’.²⁶ If you have not acquired the skill of self-care or need to know how to handle yourself, do enrol for MICPE now.²⁷

We are reminded that the missionaries over one hundred years ago, not knowing our language, culture, and weather, came bringing personnel, skills, money, hope, inspiration, dedication and sacrificial love to start schools, hospitals and caring centres for us. They came with God’s agenda and for God’s created people who at that time did not know God yet. They persevered with the hope that one day all their efforts will come to fruition and bring glory to God. The Diocesan Association of Singapore and West Malaysia commonly known as SWMDA was formed in 1911 by the missionaries themselves in response to the obedience to God’s commands.²⁸ We need to learn from our missionaries and to catch their passion and zeal of unconditional service. Since their departure decades ago, we have not started any school, hospital, clinic, except a few social care centres recently. When I say to start schools or hospitals or social centres, I mean the non profit and non business type. There is much for us to learn and catch up from the examples of the past missionaries.

²⁶ Edmund Ng, *The Time Approach to Grief Support – An Easy Technique for Every Christian*, Wine Press, USA, 2011, preface.

²⁷ We feel sad of losing and missing the late Dss. Wong Yoke Chan who was heading the MICPE and the initiator of the BM department. Those who wish to know more about MICPE can visit www.malaysiacpe.com or contact the diocesan office.

²⁸ David Huntley, *The History of SWMDA*, unpublished paper, England, 2015. The Diocesan Association of Singapore and West Malaysia (SWMDA) was formed with three main aims:- 1) To raise and send missionaries to Singapore and West Malaysia (then Malaya), 2) To raise funds for the missionaries and ministries (including schools, hospitals, social centres and churches) in Singapore and West Malaysia, 3) To pray for the missionaries, ministries, churches and people of Singapore and West Malaysia. This year (2015) marks the official closing of SWMDA after 104 years at the closing Eucharist on 13 June 2015 at St John’s Waterloo, UK.

Apparently, this is the best weapon in any circumstance to project and portray the sincere image and love of God to the non believers. Almost all the schools, hospitals and caring centres are still actively serving everyone in the nation. These facilities transcend race, ethnicity, language, and class. In fact, a proper understanding of the atoning work of Christ should inevitably lead to an overflow of the love of God with the power of the Holy Spirit through us to the needy. We have been too much in the defence mode; instead we should be pro-active and to pave the way ahead for others to follow, particularly in the arena of social care.

Of course, the one other factor which has contributed to our slow involvement in social care is timing. When the missionaries left, the Church was very small and weak. She was still heavily dependent of foreign helps such as USPG, CMS, ABM, etc. The focus then was to be self sufficient and be independent of foreign helps; there was little or practically no interest to help others when we couldn't help ourselves. The main concern then was to build up the Church in terms of numbers and finance and to raise local leaders. The saying goes 'When little food is in one's own mouth, there will not be any to share'. After 45 years today, we are bold to say that it is timely for us to look out and look up to see that the harvest is plentiful and is ripe for harvest.

The fourth and fifth marks of the transformation of unjust structures and the safeguarding of the integrity of creation respectively are the weakest links in our churches. To many members, it is assumed and presupposed that churches and Christians should not get involved in politics and governments, let alone transforming unjust structures. Many times I was criticised and scolded by our own brethren for issuing statements against the unscrupulous, abusive, unjust, manipulative, disruptive actions and threats of our authorities, while I was the Chair of the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM). I must say that they are also many praises and amens too. Of course, there are some who wish that we can issue statements to every issue on the face of the earth which some are already doing with their whatsapp and facebook. I am happy that the churches in Malaysia have come a long way in working together at CFM as one voice and in one accord.²⁹ The greater the pressure, the closer we are. It is my hope that this bond of affection and working relationship will one day become a stronger united front outwardly and a trust in camaraderie transcending denominations and local churches internally. We need to raise up and send many more Christians into the civil societies and political arena both inside the opposition camps as well as in ruling government. We need more salt and light in these areas though we are aware that some only carry the label Christian. Our problem is that sometimes our own Christians are the ones who keep shooting and condemning these few Christian politicians in parliament and state assemblies. We should instead pray, encourage and support them, obviously not for their wrongs, but in words, actions and presence. We need more Daniels, Josephs, Jeremiahs, Nehemiahs, Moses, Esthers, and Nicodemus. Within our government authorities, if there is not found a single Christian MP, where then are we supposed to look for the light of Christ?

²⁹ The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) is a national body which comprises three component Christian bodies, namely, the Roman Catholic Church in Malaysia, the Council of Churches of Malaysia, and the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship. It was established in 1984. The CFM is one of the very few Christian federations in the world where almost all the branches and denominations of the Christian world are represented and working together in harmony.

Peter Shaw, in his book 'Effective Christian Leaders in the Global Workplace', quoted a paragraph from Tom Wright, from his commentary on Matthew 5:13-16, he noted:³⁰

God has called Israel to be the salt of the earth; but Israel was behaving like everyone else, with its power politics, its factional squabbles, its military revolutions. How could God keep the world from going bad – the main function of salt in the ancient world – if Israel, his chosen 'salt', had lost its distinctive taste? ... Israel was the people through whom God intended to shine his bright light into the world's dark corners, not simply to show up evil but to enable people who were blundering around in the dark to find their way. But what if the people called to be light-bearers had become part of the darkness? That was Jesus' warning – and also his challenge, Jerusalem, the city on the hill, was supposed to be a beacon of hope to the world. His followers were to be like that: their deep, heartfelt keeping of God's laws would be a sign to the nations around that the one God, the Creator, the God of Israel, was God indeed, and that they should worship him.

The fifth mark was never an agenda a century ago within the government or churches. Due to the rapid pace of developments, dwindling of natural resources, global warming, food wastage, pollution of non-biodegradable and environment hazardous materials, it is a responsibility of all people to 'safeguard the integrity of creation'. If the government does not start the 'save the environment' awareness, the church can start. We should, all the more, do this because the earth belongs to the Lord and for the sake of our children's children. In recent years, we have begun the R.E.A.C.H. which is the acronym for 'Relief, Emergency And Crisis Help' because of the number of natural disasters in our world. We cannot keep raising funds for the victims of disasters and fold our hands to the agenda in the making of our world green. Lots of teaching and awareness programmes should be our initial steps. We should adopt the slogan – Conserve, Recycle, Reuse – to be our daily motto so much so that it will be ingrained into the lives of our children and our children's children. This world constantly bombards us with consumerism and materialism, and often lures us to give top priority and to adopt our lives according to these slogans – enjoyment is No. 1, satisfy yourself first, money is God, luxury is heaven, title is fame, position is power, more pay – less work is God's commandment, fringe benefit is entitlement, promotion is God's Will, etc. Unknowingly, our shallow Christian lives are entangled with the world's standard, and such standards are also brought into some of our churches. In the search for liberation and freedom to live as Disciples of Christ, a group of urban young Christian adults in New Zealand called Urban Vision Community (a Protestant movement known as New Monasticism), deliberately relocated themselves to share with those who are struggling, homeless, sick, poor, neglected, marginalised, their founders, Jenny and Justin Duckworth, in their book, *Against the Tide, Towards the Kingdom*, strongly advised,³¹

"In fact the liberation for me has come in understanding that God calls me not only to have less but to do less. We don't have to save the whole world. His call does not drive us to the ground. He helps us live the moment and appreciate what and who we have right in front of us. We have begun to stop needing more. Our internal space has simplified.

³⁰ Peter Shaw, *Effective Christian Leaders in the Global Workplace*, Paternoster, Colorado Springs, 2010, p.101f – Peter quoting from Tom Wright, *Matthew for Everyone*, Part 1, Chapter 1-15, SPCK, London, 2002, p.40

³¹ Jenny & Justin Duckworth, *Against the Tide, Towards the Kingdom*, Cascade Books, Eugene, USA, 2011, p.68

So we make progress on a simple lifestyle in order to live a generous lifestyle – and the outward journey is prophetic to others and frees us up. Too often we hear, “they burnt out”, around mission and community, but our perspective is that most people “busy out” in their overcrowded lives. For those who do risk burn out, the call to simple inner life is their salvation.”

Just like the Urban Vision Community, we must advocate a lifestyle change, starting with the church, and not keep fooling ourselves that we can still carry on the same for another century. Rob Watson, an environmental consultant, warned:

‘People don’t seem to realize that it is not like we’re on the Titanic and we have to avoid the iceberg. We’ve already hit the iceberg. The water is rushing in down below. But some people just don’t want to leave the dance floor; others don’t want to give up on the buffet. But if we don’t make the hard choices, nature will make them for us. Right now, that acute awareness of the true scale and speed of this problem remains confined largely to the expert scientific community, but soon enough it will be blindingly obvious to everyone.’³²

4.0 Conclusion

In these uncertain times, we need to pray to God and personally assure Him that we are willing to cooperate and obey His commands by offer our lamps to Him to top up with oil in order to keep burning. Charles Ringma, an urban and cross-cultural missionary and theologian, has wonderfully summarised it in his foreword for Duckworth’s book, which precisely reflects our call.³³

“A recovery of the centrality of Christ. A call to live the gospel, not just believe the gospel. The challenge to do things together, to live in community and to be in solidarity, rather than to live our fractured individualism. The invitation to serve the poor as a way of serving Christ himself. The challenge to journey with the neighbour, rather than just to provide programs of help. The call to discover a deeper spirituality that will bring glory to God, will make us more attentive to the Spirit, and will be bread and wine for the journey. The invitation to live a more sacramental way of life. The challenge in the work of evangelization and justice to transform broken lives and communities into persons and places of healing and hope. And a call to simple lifestyle and a care for the earth that joins us with God’s concern for all that was made and for all that needs careful sustenance and renewal.”

I sense that the next ten years will be darker and harder for us, particularly Christians and churches, in this nation, do prepare more oil now. With God’s help, when the night gets darker, our little lamp will shine brightest. Our collective lamps will be a power house. Amen.

³² Thomas Friedman, *Hot, Flat and Crowded – Why the World needs a Green Revolution – and How We can Renew our Global Future*, Allen Lane, London, England, 2008, p.216 – Rob Watson was quoted by Thomas Friedman.

³³ Jenny & Justin Duckworth, op.cit., p. x - xi

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